

Conserving Landscapes of the Recent Past - Increasing our understanding of key problems, roles, initiatives and required action

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RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHOD

This paper, presented as an evening Masterclass at the conference, gives an overview of the findings from an international survey into the key problems and challenges regarding the conservation of the landscape design legacy of the post-1945 period. The survey was developed as part of a PhD research project at the De Montford University, Leicester, under the title 'Identifying key problems regarding the conservation of designed landscapes: Landscapes of the recent past' by Dr Jan Haenraets and under the supervision of Dr Obas John Ebohon.

The purpose of the research project was to improve the understanding of the present status and the key problems regarding the conservation of designed landscapes of the recent past. Another aim was to investigate the roles and initiatives undertaken by key stakeholders and recommend main areas for measures and action to enhance the conservation and protection of designed landscapes of the recent past. The emphasis of the research was on the United Kingdom but relevant findings and actions from an international context were included. A research question and philosophy behind the approach was that developing and enhancing the conservation of designed landscapes of

the recent past will be impossible without a comprehensive understanding of the present situation and the key concerns.

A qualitative method was applied using the between-method triangulation research methodology, which combined two methods of investigation, namely data triangulation and theory triangulation. Theory triangulation allowed for an investigation of the wider context or 'the general' and a comparison of findings from published sources and records, including an examination of the existing inventories and the roles and initiatives of key stakeholders. The data triangulation used a case study survey, with questionnaires and interviews, to enable the collection and analysis of data from different categories of stakeholders from a site-specific perspective or 'the particular' context. The case study survey investigated eleven case study sites using questionnaires and interviews. A total of 146 respondents were contacted and 103 completed responses were received.

DEFINING THE SUBJECT AREA

To set the scene for the research project the key terminology was defined and explained within the context of the study. For this purpose designed landscapes were defined, after which the meaning behind the recent past within the context of this study was

explored. This allowed for the preparation of an overview of categories of designed landscapes of the recent past. Given the scope of the research the definitions for conservation and the conservation process were also clarified. The main categories of stakeholders, or organisations and people that are involved in the conservation process of designed landscapes were also explored as these categories needed to be understood as a useful framework under which the activities of all stakeholders could be assessed.

RESEARCHING 'THE GENERAL'

Continuing destruction and disfigurement of significant sites

From the research it became clear that while policy frameworks and international conservation charters are in place to facilitate the protection of significant heritage, serious threats to sites remain. The conference introduction paper on 'Nurturing greater support' gives further clarification about these findings.

Inventory Work

From the literature review of existing recommendations it became clear that one of the suggestions for actions that was mentioned frequently in existing charters and recommendations was the need for the preparation of inventories and the official listing of designed landscapes of the recent past. To enhance the general understanding of the status of landscapes of the recent past on existing inventories and registers an assessment was undertaken of several registers, including:

- The Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England
- The Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes in Scotland
- The National Register of Historic Places, United States
- DOCOMOMO Registers
 - DOCOMOMO National and Regional Registers
 - DOCOMOMO International Selection
 - DOCOMOMO and the UNESCO World Heritage List
 - DOCOMOMO Scottish National Group Urban Register pilot project
 - DOCOMOMO at Risk Lists
- The UNESCO World Heritage List
- The ICOMOS Heritage at Risk Reports
- Parks and Gardens UK Database
- World Monuments Fund: Lists of endangered sites
- Lists of endangered sites of the recent past

Some of the main findings from this review include:

- Small number of designed

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- landscapes from the recent past on inventories
- Thematic restrictions of inventories
 - Need for better statutory protection and control for sites on inventories
 - The importance of non-listed sites
 - Unified inventories and allowing the listing of groups of features
 - Need for consistency in approaches
 - Poor accessibility of inventories
 - Absence of initiatives to nominate landscape sites for governmental listing
 - Involving landscape specialists and promoting registers amongst landscape specialists
1. A gradual change of attitude to the recent past in the 1980s
 - a. Changes in listing and legislation
 - b. New recommendations and listing initiatives
 - c. Increasing awareness
 2. Initial initiatives on landscapes of the recent past since 1995
 - a. Key initiatives in the United States
 - b. Actions by DOCOMOMO
 - c. A slow start in the United Kingdom
 3. Emphasis on material and technological challenges of buildings of the recent past
 4. International initiatives on landscapes of the recent past since 2000
 5. Increased focus on landscapes of the recent past in the United Kingdom since 2000
 6. The momentum stagnates

Conservation Initiatives by Stakeholders

The conference introduction paper on 'Nurturing greater support, understanding and stewardship for landscapes of the recent future' (which can be found in these proceedings) did present a summary of general trends and developments that occurred since the 1980s within the field of the conservation of architecture and landscape architecture of the mid and late Twentieth Century. In the Masterclass additional examples of initiatives by stakeholders acting at an international and national level were explored. The chronological key trends were summarised under the following headings:

Clearly many valuable initiatives were undertaken in recent decades that directly or indirectly contributed towards the conservation of landscapes of the recent past. Nevertheless many sites continue to get damaged or lost and more actions are required to achieve for these landscapes the objectives of recommendations such as found in the European Landscape Convention. Based on this analysis already

a number of conclusions and suggestions for action could be made, which would inform final recommendations of the research.

RESEARCHING 'THE PARTICULAR: THE CASE STUDY SURVEYS

It became clear that existing literature and research resources did not provide sufficient information about 'the particular' context, meaning from the perspective of the stakeholder categories of people closely involved in the day to day management of sites and the wider public and visitors. To address this fundamental gap in understanding it was decided to use field surveys under a case study method. The case studies allowed for the collection of new primary data through questionnaires and interviews and in-depth examination and analysis of the data. Eleven case study sites were selected for this purpose. In the masterclass the approach to the case study methodology and sample frame was explained by illustrating:

- Criteria and validity: The case study method must fulfil three criteria:
 - Reliability
 - Internal validity
 - External validity
- Data Triangulation using a Qualitative Methodology
 - Interviews
 - Questionnaires
- The gathering of limited quantitative data

- The data analysis method: It was decided to use a manual method to analyse the data, while making use of coding techniques.
- The sample frame was based on:
 - The selected case studies
 - The types of respondents per site
- The selected case studies
- The types of respondents per site
 - Age groups
 - Targeted number of surveys
 - Total number of responses
 - Number of respondents for each case study site

The cross-examination and analysis of the main concerns and challenges that were raised by respondents in the case study surveys were summarised under ten categories. Ten categories were used for ease of interpretation and to facilitate empirical validation of the theoretical analysis in the literature review chapters. The first category, lack of awareness and recognition, also gave more insights about people's opinions about landscapes of the recent past, the reasons for poor recognition and the threat this poses to landscapes of the recent past.

a. Awareness and recognition

The subject of awareness and recognition came up consistently in the findings of the previous literature review and the case study survey, and confirms that people's opinions and the lack of recognition remain an underlying threat to landscapes of the

recent past. The survey provided more insight into the opinions of people about recent past landscapes, a subject area which would still benefit from further research. An important conclusion was nevertheless that not everyone has an opinion and where opinions are shared for designed landscapes of the recent past, not all of such opinions are low. Finally, opinions change and evolve over time.

b. Concerns about management and maintenance

The survey provided data in relation to the work done by stakeholders that are involved in the day to day management of sites, for which limited documentation was available in existing literature sources. Concerns that were raised in relation to the maintenance of sites included: low opinions caused by poor maintenance of sites (Figure 1 and 2); threats to sites due to poor maintenance ;



Fig. 1: Dereliction of the landscaping of the Commonwealth Institute in London. A 1958 building commission for the architectural firm of Sir Robert Matthew, Johnson-Marshall & Partners (RMJM), with landscape design by Dame Sylvia Crowe (Author's photograph, 2006).



Fig. 2: Urgent need of repairs of the landscaping of the Commonwealth Institute in London in 2006 (Author's photograph, 2006).

continuity and commitment is needed; lower expectations of maintenance in public spaces can be observed; staffing levels and equipment for maintenance are a major concern; impacts of design and understanding on maintenance; high cost of maintenance; and the need for taking into account environmental friendly approaches and climate change. A key finding is that further research is needed to improve the understanding of the problems with the management and maintenance of designed landscapes of the recent past.

c. Concerns about finance and budgets

Significant concerns were voiced in the survey, such as the shortage of funding for equipment, material and plants, and staffing. On-site staff wish for endowment funds and a change of attitude by funding bodies. The difficulty to tap into major public funding and risks associated with exclusive private sector funding for commercialisation were raised, as was the apparent waste of funds and business-run misuse of budgets.

d. Challenges associated with materials and design

The analysis in the literature review showed that the understanding of technological and material challenges was highlighted in existing recommendations. The fact that more research is still required on the subject of materials for landscaping purposes was also confirmed through the case studies. The survey did also point out a number of gaps in recommendations and initiatives under this subject. Most importantly existing recommendations have paid less attention to the issues relating to the design of sites. The use in design of poor materials, experimental approaches, narrow range of plants, together with academic unrealistic and unpractical designs, now cause practical challenges that need further investigation (Figure 3 and 4). It can be concluded that both design and planting are areas of concern that must be highlighted in recommended areas of actions for the conservation of landscapes of the recent past.



Fig. 3: The Gibberd Garden's Castle and Moat makes use of experimental materials (Author's photograph, 2006).



Fig. 4: Challenging designs with the use of contemporary materials at Portrack, the Garden of Cosmic Speculation (Author's photograph, 2006).

e. Shortcomings in conservation planning and development processes

In general survey, analysis and evaluation of sites received proper attention in existing recommendations, and stakeholders paid much attention towards improving planning, but nevertheless there always remains scope for better implementation of planning methodologies. A key finding is that the subject of development in landscapes was highlighted by many respondents as a main area of concern and given the ongoing destruction of sites it is clear that the issue should receive more attention in recommendations and guidelines to improve the conservation of sites. Similarly drivers behind the decisions in conservation processes can be further researched as major concerns were mentioned about the politics behind sites, the use of design competitions, and the ignorance over subtle approaches compared to a favouring of non-sensitive big impact schemes (Figure 5). Finally, an observation is that respondents did not highlight monitoring and recording in the surveys.



Fig. 5: Major redevelopment proposals proposed in 2004 the removal of the Modernist Rotunda at Bannockburn. Proper conservation research and planning resulted in the listing of the Rotunda and new more subtle proposals in 2011 retained and integrated the Rotunda in the redevelopment proposals (Author's photograph, 2004).

f. Challenges with consulting and involving people

In the study consultation and participation have consistently been pointed out as of essential importance to the conservation of sites. Nevertheless the responses in the survey showed that planning processes still frequently fall short in regard of holistic interdisciplinary approaches and consultation. Staff at sites desire a greater involvement and original designers are rarely consulted. A concern that was noted was that respondents forgot to mention educational institutions and archives as being important stakeholders that should be consulted and involved in the conservation process. While cooperation has been highlighted in many recommendations, this came up as a gap in the responses of the case study surveys. This indicates that there is still a significant need for action to improve partnership and cooperation at a wider level, and site-specific level.

g. Concerns about social problems and vandalism

The case study survey was most valuable in pointing out that while matters relating to social problems have not been highlighted in existing recommendations, this is seen as an important area for concern by the wider public and people involved in the day to day management of sites. Respondents saw an important need for addressing social problems, vandalism and security issues, for the well being of the community and the site (Figure 6). Communities have an important role to play in this process.



Fig. 6: Safety and vandalism remains a concern about the Rotunda at Bannockburn, Scotland (Author's photograph, 2006).

h. Concerns about legal protection and politics

The lack of proper supportive legal protection and legislation was mentioned throughout the study and respondents also raised various concerns. Key observations are that there is limited statutory protection for these landscapes and approaches differ between countries, and even within the United Kingdom. The inventories of landscapes of the recent past are still seriously lagging behind, when compared

with buildings. Respondents also said that listing is not always helpful and that politics surrounding sites cause conflicts.

i. Concerns about marketing and commercialisation

The case study survey identified several concerns in relation to the marketing and promotion of sites, and their commercial use. The promotion of sites does get some mention in existing recommendations, but mainly in relation to improving awareness. The case study survey also gathered better opinions on the subject of marketing from the perspective of people involved at sites. A key lesson learned from these responses is that while sites and marketing specialists appear to struggle to promote designed landscapes from the recent past, respondents see significant concerns regarding increased visitor numbers, commercial activities and events at certain sites, and the risks of damage through popularity.

j. Concerns about education, enjoyment, interpretation and access

The subject of education and training was mentioned in several existing recommendations. The case study survey confirmed that further efforts are required to improve achievements within this area, in particular the need for specialised skills and understanding of the conservation of designed landscapes of the recent past. The current skills crisis in horticulture makes the need for action urgent. Given the fact that the case study surveys studied the issues from the perspective of the wider public, visitors and people involved in the day to day management of sites, responses

identified another shortcoming in available recommendations and data, namely the challenges with education (Figure 7) and access to sites. The importance of education and access is recognised but opening hours, events to generate income, general wear and tear, access for dogs, groups and children, the impact of facilitating better access, health and safety regulations, were all viewed as conflicts (Figure 8).



Fig. 7: Constructing the Swiss Landscape at Harvard University Graduate School of Design in 2006 (Author's photograph, 2007).



Fig. 8: Conservation challenges of visitor access and wear and tear at the narrow paths at Little Sparta (Author's photograph, 2006).

CONCLUSIONS FROM THE CASE STUDY SURVEY AND CROSS-EXAMINATION

The case study survey provided new data to help us understand whether current measures for the protection and

conservation of designed landscapes are efficient, and assisted in identifying gaps and shortcomings. Many of the problems that were raised in the case studies are not new to conservation and apply to the conservation of sites from any era. On the other hand, several problems are specific to designed landscapes from the recent past and their conservation. A general conclusion is that many of the issues would not arise if the existing conservation processes and methodologies would be followed.

The cross-comparison of the findings of the literature review, evaluation of actions by key stakeholders and the case study surveys of sites resulted in key conclusions and recommendations. Gaps that exist in the implementation of existing recommendations could be identified. This led to a series of recommendations and general observations which were structured under three main headings, which to a degree overlap. However, by structuring the recommendations in these three categories the survey aimed to highlight that action needs to occur at various levels.

Recommendations and observations for the wider context

- Progress was made, but much ongoing efforts are required
- Landscapes require more attention
- Prepare accessible data and overviews of existing initiatives
- Improve awareness and recognition

of designed landscapes of the recent past

- Use the current and established standards, methods and principles of conservation
- The preparation of an international charter or guideline on the conservation of designed landscapes of the recent past
- Formulate national strategies
- Develop recommendations that are more site specific and of local relevance
- Improve the efficiency of legal protection and registration of landscapes of the recent past
- Improving the understanding of the wider context and full diversity of landscape architecture of the recent past
- Improve the understanding of technological and material challenges, including that on planting and soft landscaping materials.

Recommendations for the site-specific context

- Progress systematic identification, survey, evaluation and planning
- Improve the management and

maintenance of sites

- Resolve challenges associated with impractical and experimental designs
- Avoid inappropriate disfigurements of sites and developments
- Improve monitoring and record keeping, and ensure proper archives
- Address finance and budgets, and the use of funds
- Increase promotion and marketing of landscapes of the recent past
- Recognise and manage impacts of access and enjoyment of sites

Recommendations relating to stakeholders

- Integrate consultation and participation in all aspects of the conservation process
- Increase training, education and interpretation opportunities
- Improve conservation practice through cooperation and partnerships
- Tackle the problems associated with anti-social behaviour at sites
- Compile accessible overviews of who is doing what, and who should be doing what, with suggestions of

actions for specific disciplinary categories

- Establish expert committees on the subject within existing organisations, such as professional landscape architecture membership organisations
- Set up a specialist organisation to promote stewardship and conservation of landscapes, including designed landscapes of the recent past

THE DOCOMOMO LANDSCAPE ACTION PLAN

The thesis research and survey assists with the development of documentation towards some of the needed actions, but further actions and research is clearly needed to make the required progress at all levels. The research confirmed that DOCOMOMO International should play a key role in the process of enhancing the conservation of landscapes of the recent past. In order for DOCOMOMO International and its National Working Parties to take some of the recommendations forward, DOCOMOMO ISC/U+L is developing a DOCOMOMO Landscape Action Plan. The initiative to work towards such Plan was endorsed by DOCOMOMO International at their bi-annual International Conference in Mexico City in August 2010.

The key objectives and timetable to achieve such Plan that are taken forward by DOCOMOMO ISC/U+L are:

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- April 2011: The organisation of the conference on 'Landscapes of the Recent Future at the ECA in Edinburgh.
- 2011-12: The development of the ISC U + L website to raise awareness about the conservation of landscapes of the recent past and as a resource database. The site may also highlight landscapes at risk and link to other important initiatives online.
- 2011-12: DOCOMOMO ISC U+L will develop an analysis of the findings of Jan Haenraets' thesis to assess what is applicable to DOCOMOMO, what this means for DOCOMOMO, and which actions DOCOMOMO International and the National Working Parties should as a result undertake.

Preparation of an Intention Statement for DOCOMOMO International in relation to a programme on landscapes of the recent past/modern movement.

Revisiting the idea of a book by DOCOMOMO ISC/U+L on key issues, progress and challenges with the conservation of landscapes of the recent past.
- August 2012: The presentation of an agreed Intention Statement and Action Programme at the 2012 International Conference in Helsinki for Docomomo International and National Working Groups.
- August 2012 -2015: Implementation of the first actions, such as:

Home work by DOCOMOMO National Working Groups, such as the preparation of a stipulated number of Fiches on landscapes of the recent past. This would fit within the approach launched in 2002 for the thematic approach to international fiches with every national working party being asked to submit five fiches on a specific theme.

Development of a DOCOMOMO International publication on key landscapes of the recent past or modern movement.

With the organisation of the Day Conference on Landscapes of the Recent Future a first step towards the realisation of the Landscape Action Plan has been realised. DOCOMOMO ISC/U+L will use the outcomes of the conference to inform and finalise the Landscape Action Plan.